



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### **15 Leaders in High School Activity Programs to Receive NFHS Citations**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Bruce Howard

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (January 27, 2022)— Fifteen leaders in high school activity programs across the country have been selected to receive National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Citations.

An award designed to honor individuals who have made contributions to the NFHS, state high school associations, athletic director and coaching professions, the officiating avocation and fine arts/performing arts programs, the NFHS Citation is one of the most highly regarded achievements in high school athletics and performing arts.

Citations for state high school associations, coaching, officiating and performing arts will be presented June 30 at the annual NFHS Summer Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to 2022 awards for all four groups, 2021 Citations for coaching, officiating and performing arts will be presented as well.

Seven of the 15 award recipients represent NFHS-member state high school associations, seven represent NFHS professional organizations for officials, coaches, music leaders and speech/debate/theatre directors, and one individual represents both groups.

The eight 2022 state association Citation recipients are **Bob Johnson**, Section 1, associate executive director, Vermont Principals' Association (VPA); **Tom Dolan**, Section 2, associate director, Virginia High School League (VHSL); **Skip Lax**, Section 3, retired associate commissioner, South Carolina High School League (SCHSL); **Joan Gralla**, Section 4, retired office manager, Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA); **Francine Martin**, Section 5, assistant executive director, Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA); **Don Brodell**, Section 6, associate executive director, Arkansas Activities Association (AAA); **Jay Beesemyer**, Section 7, assistant director, Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA); and **Mark Beckman**, Section 8, executive director, Montana High School Association (MHSAA).

The 2021 Citation recipients representing the NFHS professional organizations are **Francine Martin**, NFHS Officials Association, assistant executive director, Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA); **Earl Etheridge**, NFHS Coaches Association, retired coach and athletic director, Savannah, Georgia; **Bill Webb**, NFHS Music Association, retired band director, Edina High School, Edina, Minnesota; and **Adam Jacobi**, NFHS Speech/Debate/Theatre/Academics Association, executive director, Wisconsin High School Forensic Association, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

The 2022 Citation recipients representing the NFHS professional organizations are **Philip DiDomenico**, NFHS Officials Association, football, basketball and lacrosse official, Clark, New Jersey; **Woody Barnett**, NFHS Coaches Association, retired track/cross country coach and executive director of the Mississippi Athletic Administrators Association, Pearl, Mississippi; **Darrin Davis**, NFHS Music Association, director of bands/assistant director of fine arts, Broken Arrow Public Schools, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma; and **Magda Irizarry-Mirelez**, NFHS Speech/Debate/Theatre/Academics Association, speech, debate and theatre coach, Bay City High School, Bay City, Texas.

## **State Association Citation Recipients**

**Bob Johnson**, currently the VPA associate executive director, has been a member of the VPA staff since 2003. Prior to joining the Vermont association, Johnson was principal of Danville (Vermont) School for eight years, and assistant principal/director of guidance at Lamoille High School in Hyde Park, Vermont. He currently serves on the NFHS Middle School Committee and is a former member of NFHS Football Rules Committee, NFHS Hall of Fame Screening Committee, the NFHS Records Committee and the NFHS Summer Meeting Advisory Committee.

**Tom Dolan** has served as assistant and associate director of the VHSL since 2007 after 29 years as a high school coach and athletic director. During his days at New Kent High School, Lafayette High School and Jamestown High School, Dolan coached baseball, girls basketball, volleyball, and golf. Dolan served on the Virginia Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (VIAAA) Executive Board for many years and was VIAAA president in 2007. At the VHSL, he directs the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, Coaches Education Committee and Football Rating System.

**Skip Lax** retired in 2020 after 10 years as associate commissioner of the South Carolina High School League (SCHSL) and 30 years as a teacher, coach, athletic director, assistant principal and principal at several schools in South Carolina and Florida. After coaching football, baseball and cross country in Florida, Lax returned to South Carolina as assistant principal at Barnwell High School and principal at Williston-Elko High School. He was president of the SCHSL Executive Committee in 2009-10 before joining the League staff.

**Joan Gralla** retired in December 2020 after 40 years on the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association staff. In addition to her duties as office manager, Gralla oversaw the WIAA officials licensing department for many years. She was staff

liaison to the Officials Advisory Committee and led the efforts in recruiting and retaining officials. She also was liaison to the Middle Level Advisory Council, managed the Noncertified Coaches Program and served on the NFHS Coaches Education Committee.

**Francine Martin** joined the Kansas State High School Activities Association staff in 2004. She currently oversees cross country and basketball and handles the state's officials program. She also coordinates the Kansas Coaching School for more than 1,000 coaches and is the staff liaison to the state athletic/activity directors association. She has served two terms on the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee, including a recently completed term as the committee's first female chairperson. Prior to the KSHSAA, Martin was an activities director/assistant principal at Topeka (Kansas) Seaman High School and athletic director at El Dorado (Kansas) High School.

**Don Brodell** joined the Arkansas Activities Association staff in 2000 and currently serves as associate executive director. Brodell is currently the state rules interpreter for baseball and wrestling, and he serves as liaison to the Arkansas Officials Association. As an official in Arkansas for more than 20 years, Brodell officiated numerous state basketball and football championships and he was inducted into the Arkansas Officials Association Hall of Fame. Brodell has served on the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and Football Rules Editorial Committee, and he is in his second term on the NFHS Officials Advisory Committee.

**Jay Beesemyer** has served as assistant director of the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association for 25 years. Beesemyer manages the NIAA financial operations, oversees all aspects for the NIAA's officials organization, assists with statewide meetings and special events and directs the Nevada Coaching Education Program. Beesemyer has worked for three executive directors – Jerry Hughes, Eddie Bonine and Bart Thompson –

and is working hand-in-hand with Donnie Nelson, currently the NIAA interim executive director.

**Mark Beckman** has served on the Montana High School Association executive staff since 1997, including the past 18 years as executive director. He was a teacher, athletic director and activities director at Butte Central Junior High/High School and Anaconda High School in Montana for 17 years before joining the MHSA. Beckman recently completed a term on the NFHS Board of Directors, including a year as Board president in 2019-20. He also served on the NFHS Network Board of Directors and was a member of the NFHS Strategic Planning Committee in 2011 and the NFHS Citizenship Committee.

### **2021 Professional Organizations Citation Recipients**

**Francine Martin** joined the Kansas State High School Activities Association staff in 2004. She currently oversees cross country and basketball and handles the state's officials program. She also coordinates the Kansas Coaching School for more than 1,000 coaches and is the staff liaison to the state athletic/activity directors association. She has served two terms on the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee, including a recently completed term as the committee's first female chairperson. Prior to the KSHSAA, Martin was an activities director/assistant principal at Topeka (Kansas) Seaman High School and athletic director at El Dorado (Kansas) High School.

**Earl Etheridge** was athletic director and football and baseball coach at Windsor Forest High School in Savannah, Georgia, from 1967 to 1984, after beginning his coaching career at Savannah High School. In 1995, he began working with the City of Savannah and served in various capacities over the years. Etheridge served on the

Georgia High School Association Executive Committee for 28 years and was tournament director for numerous GHSA state championships.

**Bill Webb** was the band director at Edina (Minnesota) High School for nearly 30 years before retiring in 2015. From 1987 to 2010, an estimated 4,200 Edina students participated in Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) Solo and Ensemble contests under his leadership. His bands performed at many local, national and international events, including performances in Singapore, Hong Kong and Beijing. Webb was the founding officer and past president of the Minnesota Band Directors Association.

**Adam Jacobi** has been executive director of the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association (WHSFA) since 2014. The WHSFA sponsors interscholastic programming and professional development in speech, debate and theatre contests. Jacobi previously coached speech and debate at his alma mater, Rufus King High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for a number of years. He also was on the administrative staff of the National Speech and Debate Association, where he coordinated membership and educational programming.

## **2022 Professional Organizations Citation Recipients**

**Philip DiDomenico** has officiated football, basketball and lacrosse in New Jersey for 45 years, and has worked in the state high school playoffs every year since 1981 in all three sports. He is a past president of the New Jersey Football Officials Association Northern Chapter and secretary of the New Jersey Lacrosse Officials Association. He also has officiated NCAA Divisions II and III football as well as NCAA lacrosse. DiDomenico officiated the NCAA Division I Lacrosse National Championship game in 1996.

**Woody Barnett** led his girls and boys cross country and track and field teams at Pearl (Mississippi) High School to an amazing 43 state championships in 36 years. In cross country, his teams won nine girls and 19 boys state titles, and in track and field, they claimed three girls and 12 boys state championships. He also coached 18 individual cross country state champions and 127 track and field champions. Barnett was the school's athletic director as well during his final 16 years.

**Darrin Davis** has been director of bands/assistant director of fine arts for the Broken Arrow (Oklahoma) Public Schools since 2009. Previously, he was co-director of bands at Broken Arrow High School and band director of Broken Arrow North Intermediate High School for 16 years. Davis is conductor of the wind ensemble and director of the nationally acclaimed 300-member Pride of Broken Arrow Marching Band. The band is a three-time Bands of America Grand National Champion and has been invited to three Tournament of Roses parade in Pasadena, California.

**Magda Irizarry-Mirelez** has been a teacher and speech/debate/theatre coach at Bay City (Texas) High School for 24 years. Mirelez's speech teams have won four Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) state championships, and she has coached 14 individual UIL state champions. In theatre, Mirelez has directed 35 full-length musicals and productions and is a five-time UIL state finalist director.

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[About the National Federation of State High School Associations \(NFHS\)](#)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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